

Community Connections

Best Practices for Schools/Administrators

Getting Started

1. **Appoint** a staff member or adult volunteer to serve as **school contact** person. Typical responsibilities include recruitment, training, and coaching of volunteers. Plan to get back to prospective volunteers immediately, even if it's only to say thank you.
2. **Recruit volunteer adults** who care about students. Clearly communicate the need for caring academic coaches, the time and place requirements, and the commitment for volunteers.
3. **Sources** for volunteers include parents, local businesses, high schools, tech schools and colleges, service agencies, and neighbors. Your whole **staff** can be recruiters who talk about the huge rewards for all in spending one hour a week with a middle school student doing homework, reading, or math.
4. **Get teachers involved!** They know what skills students need, and how a volunteer can help a student improve in school. Teachers also make effective volunteer trainers since they know exactly what they expect from students and what students need to know.
5. Aim for **one adult to one student** or one adult to a small group of students. Start with a small task, e.g., read a book together, assist with a Science project, help with homework, help organize study materials...
6. Focus on **student academic progress** and using volunteer time efficiently. Students will gain skills and valuable self-esteem; let relationships develop over time.
7. **Obtain parent permission** for student participants. Then encourage a telephone call or short meeting for those who wish more involvement. Parents are the best experts on their students.
8. Make sure that volunteers complete appropriate school/district volunteer registration or vetting **forms**.
9. **Show** simple and **frequent appreciation** to volunteers and students for their efforts and progress. Small sincere messages often mean more to volunteers than large gatherings.

10. Remember that there is **no set method** for using volunteers to help students make academic progress. You will organize what works best for your school. Contact other middle schools to see how they organize students and volunteers after school, during class, at the library, etc.
11. **Please add** your own best practices.

For more details about Community Connections or for school contacts on Best Practices, please contact **<http://jessicadoyle.wisconsin.gov>**